

Sadly, these types of religious freedom violations are happening in my own district in the State of West Virginia.

Almost a year ago, a high school student who is a Christian, in Buckhannon, West Virginia, was forced by his teachers in his public high school to attend a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender club, and then he was punished for expressing that he did not want to attend the club on the grounds that it went against his religious beliefs.

The hypocrisy of those who claim to promote tolerance, yet display such an intolerance towards those with traditional religious values, is stunning. These are just a few examples. These attacks know no boundaries. They are not based on political party, race, sex, or ethnicity. These attacks go after everyone in America.

Mr. Speaker, we need to let the citizens of our great country know that we disapprove of these continued infringements on our religious freedom.

I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in signing on to my resolution, which I plan to introduce tomorrow, to express the sense of the House of Representatives that Federal, State, and local governments should not infringe on the ability of citizens to act in accordance with their sincerely held religious beliefs.

CELEBRATING VETERANS DAY AND VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, next week Americans throughout the country will celebrate Veterans Day. In cities and towns and hamlets, which all of us come from, we will take the time to thank and to honor those men and women who have served our Nation so nobly, to protect our freedoms and to keep this country safe, safe from all harm, foreign and domestic.

Americans take a great deal of pride in their service to our country, and we must also remember those men and women who are today serving in Active Duty in harm's way throughout the world.

I want to take this opportunity to honor two veterans who passed away this last September, who I worked with closely and who were community leaders, Charlie Waters and Earl Watson, both gentlemen who exemplified what is the best and the brightest our Nation has to offer.

Earl Watson, or as many like to call him, "Earl, the Pearl," was a World War II veteran. After the war, he moved to Los Angeles, where he worked as a doorman in the famous Hotel Knickerbocker. During a difficult time in our Nation's history, during World War II, when segregation was still in many places the law of the land, Earl was most proud that he could serve his Nation. He wrote a bi-

ography titled "Earl 'The Pearl' Watson: Doorman to the Stars." But what he was most proud of was his service to our Nation.

Earl loved people. He had a big smile, a friendly demeanor, and an eagerness to help those in need. Anytime a veteran ever came to him or a veterans organization had a problem, he was there to be helpful. Earl told me, when we were able to retrieve his medals that he had earned during his service to our country, that the proudest moment of all the many things he had done in his life was his service to our country.

Earl is survived by his wife of 71 years, Melba; his children, Alan and Coleen; and grandchildren, Eric, Ashley, and Jonathan, who he was so, so very proud of.

Another veterans' advocate who we all miss in the San Joaquin Valley is Charlie Waters, who served in the United States Marine Corps during the Korean war. Charlie, as he was affectionately known by all, never ever stopped fighting on behalf of veterans. I worked closely with him for many years, from working to get recognition for Hmong veterans to advocating for the funding of the opening of the veterans home that we successfully did that provides residence to those who deserve it. As a matter of fact, in Charlie's last days, he was able to stay there.

He was a true champion of veterans not only throughout the Valley, but the Nation. But he did not stop there: supporting the Veterans Administration Hospital in Fresno and providing support for their efforts; organizing and helping continue the Veterans Day parade, which is one of the largest veterans parades in the entire nation that is shown on Armed Services Television; and individuals. No problem was too big or too small, as long as a veteran was there who needed Charlie's help.

Therefore, we miss both Charlie and Earl very much for all that they have done and all that they exemplified in terms of honor, duty, and service to country. Charlie is survived by his wife, Cathy; and children, Charlie Waters, III, Karen, and Jennifer.

Mr. Speaker, we want to take this time to recognize those leaders, those leaders who made a difference during their lives in serving our country. They are both shining examples of those who always—always—cared first and foremost for our Nation.

As we celebrate Veterans Day next week around the country, in towns and hamlets and cities throughout the Nation, we should think about all these veterans. We should think about the men and women who have served our Nation today in Active Duty. Never ever forget to say thank you for their service to a grateful Nation.

□ 1030

COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT OF MINERAL RIGHTS ACT OF 2015

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, since first being elected to serve the citizens of Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District, I have had the honor to represent both the Allegheny National Forest and Pennsylvania's historic Oil Region, where the commercial oil industry began in 1859. This region of north central Pennsylvania was built on our natural resources, and this legacy remains a deep part of our heritage.

The Oil Region designation came about because of the city of Titusville, which has been aptly nicknamed "the valley that changed the world." It was there in 1859 that Colonel Edwin Drake drilled the world's first commercial oil well, which set the wheels in motion for the worldwide commercial use of petroleum. Some 60 years following Colonel Drake's historic well, the Allegheny National Forest was created in nearby Warren, Elk, Forest, and McKean Counties.

Like so many areas of the West, this national forest is intrinsically connected to the prosperity of our communities. A mixed use of oil and gas production, timbering, hardwood research, recreation, and tourism make the Allegheny National Forest unique to the East Coast and truly a treasure for the mid-Atlantic region.

In the Allegheny, more than 90 percent of the mineral rights are owned by the private sector. With the long history in oil and gas development in the region, private landowners had the foresight to reserve their mineral rights when the Federal Government acquired these surface lands.

You see, Mr. Speaker, there is not a national government-run oil company. There has long been an understanding in our great country that, when it comes to resources, and specifically energy development, the private sector does it better. For generations, this arrangement successfully operated with oil and gas development taking place in the Allegheny National Forest.

Unfortunately, over the past decade, some opponents of production made attempts to mandate new regulations or limit access to the private mineral rights through numerous lawsuits. After years of litigation, a Federal court rightfully ruled in favor of the private landowners maintaining reasonable access to their property.

Federal courts have consistently ruled that the United States Forest Service lacks regulatory authority over these private mineral rights. Similar rulings and new regulations that would seek to limit production have also been issued.

Today, I am introducing the Cooperative Management of Mineral Rights Act of 2015, and I ask my colleagues who believe in the importance of private property and private property rights to join me as cosponsors. We need to provide clarity and continue to respect the longstanding importance of